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Security Council

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Letter dated 20 December 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

1. Acting on instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you the statement delivered by the President of the Republic of Burundi, Major Pierre Buyoya (see annex), at the highly successful donors' conference held in Paris on 11 and 12 December 2000.

2. Also on behalf of my Government, I wish to convey to you the sincere thanks of the authorities and people of Burundi for the contribution made by the Security Council in mobilizing the donor community to resume cooperation and assistance to Burundi with a view to supporting the Peace Agreement signed on 28 August 2000 and alleviating the suffering of the population caused by a war that has lasted seven years.

3. The Government and people of Burundi hope that the Security Council will continue to give its support to the peace process and to those who genuinely seek peace and reconciliation in Burundi. In particular, they urge the Council to publicly condemn the rebels who continue to commit acts of violence against the population despite the appeals by the Facilitator, Nelson Mandela, the heads of State of the region and the Council itself.

4. The Security Council should, as a matter of urgency, use its full authority and all the means at its disposal to persuade the rebel groups to end the violence and come to the negotiating table to agree on a ceasefire. The Council might also consider conducting a vigorous campaign of diplomacy towards certain countries in the region which provide training, weapons and logistics to the rebels supported by the Interahamwe, the genocidal former Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR) and the Mayi-Mayi forces from Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and permit them to pass through and to withdraw into their territory.

5. Paragraph 35 of the fifth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo mentions the "deployment by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo of five military assault boats on Lake Tanganyika" which had been "used to transport heavily armed members of the Burundian FDD and Interahamwe/ex-FAR and had landed in the United Republic of Tanzania, raising fears that this could seriously compromise the Burundi peace process".

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Thus, there is absolutely no doubt that certain neighbouring countries are fuelling the war in Burundi and jeopardizing the peace efforts being made by the Burundian people, the Facilitator, Nelson Mandela, the heads of State of the region, the donors and by the United Nations through the Security Council and the Secretary-General.

6. Article 2 (b) of the declaration signed on 28 August 2000 by the signatories of the Peace Agreement and representatives of the countries of the region and of the United Nations specifies that the armed groups are to be neutralized if they refuse to suspend hostilities. Pursuant to this provision, the Security Council should help to disarm, arrest and repatriate to Burundi the rebels of the Front pour la défense de la démocratie (FDD) and of the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) which have taken refuge in Zambia with their weapons, following the fighting that has taken place in Pweto in recent weeks.

7. Until such time as the entire international community deals rigorously and resolutely with the negative forces alluded to in the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and in paragraph 11 of the Security Council resolution of 14 December 2000 on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/RES/1332(2000)) it is unlikely that peace and security will return to the Great Lakes region; rather, the conflicts may spread to other countries in the region.

8. The Government of Burundi remains willing to pursue the peace process and to negotiate unconditionally a ceasefire with the armed groups.

9. The role of the Security Council continues to be of supreme importance, whether at the political and diplomatic level or for the mobilization of partners to put into effect the assistance that was promised during the donors' conference in Paris.

10. I should be grateful if you could arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Marc **Nteturuye**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 20 December from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Statement of the President of the Republic of Burundi at the donor conference held in Paris on 11 and 12 December 2000

Your Excellency, President Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic,

Your Excellency, President Nelson Mandela, Facilitator of the Burundi Peace Negotiations,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

My fellow countrymen,

Allow me first of all to turn to Madiba, our dear Facilitator.

Mr. President,

You are a man who has kept his promises.

The Paris Conference was conceived of and desired by you to help Burundi to overcome its crisis and poverty in order to make a gradual transition from an essentially agricultural economy to an industrial economy. We no doubt still have a long way to go, but the choice has been made, the framework outlined, and our friends have gathered together for the implementation of the project. Allow us to convey to you our joy and deep gratitude.

This event is the culmination of your tireless efforts to convince Burundian leaders to have a sense of urgency, to negotiate quickly and to reach an agreement to put an end to the violence and destruction that have caused such pain to the people of Burundi.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are immensely pleased that this conference is being held in Paris, the beautiful capital of the French Republic. Burundi has close historic and cultural ties and a tradition of well-known cooperation with Europe and especially France, a great and generous nation.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency, Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, not only for having accepted without hesitation to host this conference, but also for the unwavering support of France to the people of Burundi and its peace process. When Burundi was suffering its greatest hardships, when it was misunderstood and stood in stark isolation, France stood by it to help it to recover.

We thank His Excellency the President of the French Republic, France and the French people for their friendship.

We would also like to thank all our friends gathered here today and all the representatives of countries and international organizations who accompanied us

over the years during the lengthy negotiations. Through your presence, advice, pressure and support, you helped the Burundian negotiators to move forward together and to take the decisive step of signing a Peace Agreement on 28 August 2000. The Burundian nation will always look upon you as its friends.

In all fairness, we should also mention the United States of America, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

President Bill Clinton became personally involved twice, first by directly addressing negotiators at the Arusha International Conference Centre via videoconference with the White House, and then attending the signing ceremony for the Agreement.

We saw the presence at the summit of this leader of a great nation as a sign of considerable attention and his advice will be forever etched in our memory.

The World Bank and UNDP agreed to jointly chair this conference. This comes as no surprise to us and we are delighted. The two international organizations did not leave Burundi at all. They understood that the extreme poverty that the people of the country were sinking into could aggravate the conflict. We owe the progress that we have achieved on the path towards peace to our partners who helped our people to survive during their moments of greatest hardship.

Mr. President and our Facilitator,

Thanks to you, we took a decisive step on 28 August 2000. What does it really mean?

The cause to which you have dedicated yourself, the focus of our interests, the ultimate goal of our endeavours and the raison d'être of the Peace Agreement, is the people of Burundi. May it find peace again, achieve reconciliation, flourish by making use of the advances achieved by humankind and making its own contribution to the development of the world. That, in a nutshell, is our vision. We are in a hurry to consign the crisis in Burundi and fratricidal war to the past. We believe that the groundwork has been laid for an agreement that is sufficient enough to enable Burundians to establish new relations with each other based on a commitment to democracy and a willingness to explore new paths. Yesterday's enemies will be tomorrow's allies for the greater good of the people of Burundi, who did not deserve what happened to them.

This donor conference comes at an appropriate point in time and should give the Burundian people a strong signal that the end of the tunnel is in sight. So far, they have learned and appreciated the fact that the whole world has been mobilizing its energies to enable its political class to hold negotiations in order to usher in peace and achieve reconciliation among Burundians.

Today, the people of Burundi need to know that the refugees will soon be able to return home and quickly secure a roof over their heads; that all the displaced Burundians affected by the disaster will be rehabilitated and will be able to recover their property and rights; that schools, health centres, markets and other public facilities that were destroyed will be rebuilt and even expanded. The Burundian people are impatient to know what the signing of the Peace Agreement will bring them. They need to know that the international community supports the Facilitator's vision of transforming Burundi in the long run into an industrialized country.

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The international community's support to Burundi should not be seen as a support for the current Government or for future Governments. It should be an act of solidarity with the Burundian people and provision should be made for every possible mechanism to avoid any missteps or use not consistent with the objective initially agreed upon. That is how the Government of the Republic of Burundi sees the international community's support and that is how it intends to proceed.

My fellow countrymen,

We would now like to address you directly. Today, we have the opportunity of participating together in this donor conference. Our friends have come together to help us reconstruct the country that we, Burundians, have destroyed. The many foreign dignitaries present here today are too polite to remind us of this. We should be aware of that fact and realize that we bear the primary responsibility for the reconstruction of Burundi. We will be able to do this task if we pool our efforts together, if we set aside our differences to earn the support of the international community and the trust and respect of all Burundians.

By signing the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, we have gone back to our beginnings, which tied us together on the path of a common destiny. We could borrow a biblical image and say that the Peace Agreement concluded by the Burundian political class and formally adopted by the representatives of the people seals a new pact among the people of Burundi.

There are still many difficulties as well as so-called sensitive issues. However, we are confident that if we have the political will, persevere and enhance trust in each other we could, in the spirit of the Agreement, move forward together in an orderly fashion and definitely achieve our goal.

Let us work together without any procrastination or suspicion of each other in order to rapidly create the conditions that will permit all signatories of the Agreement to return to their country of birth. Let us hold systematic discussions on all aspects relating to the arrangements for the establishment of transitional institutions where the Agreement is silent or vague. Together, let us make use of the achievements and move forward. If we work together, no difficulties will be insurmountable. Thus, we should act together in accordance with the spirit and letter of the Agreement to persuade those of our countrymen who have still not accepted the need for peace, to join the process of peace and reconciliation. We should unite in rejecting their continuing attempt to hold the peace process to ransom.

President Nelson Mandela,

We are counting on you and your magic, on the Heads of State of the Great Lakes region and on the entire international community to overcome the last pockets of resistance to peace. We know the tireless efforts you have made to bring to the negotiating table those armed groups that are still perpetrating bloody violence in Burundi.

You are aware of our willingness and commitment to meet them without preconditions to discuss and conclude a ceasefire agreement. Be assured of our support and the support of the Burundian people who, in the final analysis, will reap the benefits of your efforts and your success.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Fellow countrymen,

We wish this conference every success and reiterate our heartfelt gratitude to all the countries and organizations that you represent here.

Long live international cooperation and may peace and national reconciliation be achieved in Burundi and flourish forever.